

WARRIORS

Quarterly Magazine for the Alaska Department of Military & Veterans Affairs

WINTER 2008/2009



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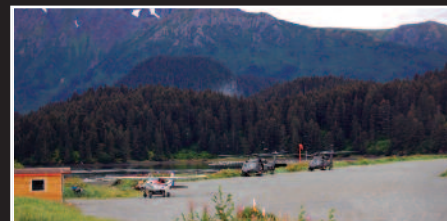
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Iditarod's Arctic Warriors. Alaska Army National Guard Staff Sergeant Harry Alexie runs 10 sled dogs on an 18-mile practice run near two-time Iditarod champion Lance Mackey's 'Comeback Kennel' training facility in Fairbanks. An all-terrain vehicle is used rather than a dog sled because it gives the dogs a little more resistance while on the trail for conditioning practice.

Photo: Specialist Paizley Ramsey, 134th Public Affairs Detachment



Honoring a Nanwalek Hero. Two Alaska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawks that brought in 11 Alaska Army National Guard Soldiers from B Company, 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry, sit on the English Bay Airstrip in Nanwalek. The Guard came to town in September as part of a Freedom Salute ceremony to honor the deployment of one of Nanwalek's own. Photo: Emily Swenning, Nanwalek Sugestun Immersion School

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veterans and families are invited and encouraged. Please send articles and photos with name, phone number, e-mail, complete mailing address and comments to:

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For the People

Governor Sarah Palin
Commander in Chief



Looking to the Future

With falling oil prices and a cold winter, Alaskans must take this time to reflect on what we need to accomplish to protect our communities. In lean times, we must have a strong list of priorities and be willing to follow through to make those priorities come to fruition.

These priorities are straightforward: respond to life-threatening emergency situations, secure the state and help defend the nation.

While accomplishing these three tasks, the Alaska National Guard has found time to give back to those who are in need, to show our love and compassion, especially during the holiday season. This year, I went with the Alaska Air and Army National Guard on an Operation Santa Claus mission to the village of Kivalina.

Kivalina has been at the center of emergency response scenarios with the construction of a retaining wall to help stop erosion. The community has also endured emergency evacuations during severe storm conditions to include moving diesel fuel from

community storage tanks into portable bladders to prevent possible spills.

It was refreshing to see the community in such high spirits when we arrived that chilly December morning. I visited with the mayor and talked about life with some of the elders. The children opened gifts that were delivered by Santa and Mrs. Claus, and the entire community joined us for a grand holiday dinner.

The volunteer effort that went into making this particular Operation Santa Claus flight possible was amazing to see, and to know that there were seven other flights that went to different villages lets me know that the spirit of giving is alive and well even during these tough economic times.

After flying to the village of Kivalina to witness this mission of giving hope, I can assure all Alaskans that when disaster strikes, these well-trained professionals will respond at a moment's notice with the same kind of care and love that defines the Alaskan spirit. ■



A Token of Thanks. Governor Sarah Palin receives a flight jacket from Lieutenant General (Alaska) Craig E. Campbell, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard, as a token of thanks for supporting the Alaska National Guard during Operation Santa Claus 2008 in Kivalina, while her daughter Piper looks on. Operation Santa Claus, an Alaska National Guard community relations and support program, provides toys, books and school supplies for young people in communities across the state. Photo: Specialist Paizley Ramsey, 134th Public Affairs Detachment



My Turn

Lieutenant General (Alaska) Craig E. Campbell
Adjutant General, Alaska National Guard
& Commissioner, Alaska Department of Military & Veterans Affairs



Six Years of Preparation Has Paid Off

The Alaska Department of Military & Veterans Affairs needed to be changed in order to remain relevant to the state. Part of this rebuilding process is preparing for the lean budget times. We are in that time, and we are ready to serve at the most elite level.

My budget for the Alaska Department of Military & Veterans Affairs shows that we are leaning forward to meet the needs of our residents, while trimming the fat to make sure we operate at the highest efficiency. Like a professional athlete, the Department of Military & Veterans Affairs is in top shape, ready to jump into action at a moment's notice.

There are some anticipated events like our Army Guard aviation deployment to Kosovo. The 1/207th has been the most deployed unit in the Alaska Army National Guard in the past five years, and this marks the second tour to Kosovo. In 2003, Alaskans played a crucial part in quelling riots that almost sparked a civil war. Now, some of these same brave Soldiers are going back to Kosovo to help keep this young country safe.

While these Soldiers and eight of their Black Hawk helicopters are gone for 12 months, we've moved the remaining helicopters out to Nome, Bethel and Juneau to provide a balance for in-state emergency response.

With oil prices at record highs this summer, we're anticipating possible fuel shortages in some of the remote communities. The Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management is in constant contact with village leadership, in all regions of the state, and in contact with the Department of Commerce, Community



Appreciation of Support. Lieutenant General (Alaska) Craig E. Campbell, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard, smiles with Howard Windel, a member of the Eagle River Chapter of the Vietnam Vets Motorcycle Club, after receiving an appreciation plaque from the organization. The Eagle River Chapter honored Campbell for his long-standing assistance and support for military events the Vietnam Vets Motorcycle club champions. Windel is also a member of the 176th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron out of Kulis Air National Guard Base. Photo: Sergeant Karima Turner, DMVA Public Affairs

and Economic Development to try to prevent a disaster. This type of forward thinking and outreach saves the state money, but more importantly, it prevents the emotional pain of those villagers who could be in a life or death situation.

This is how your state government is supposed to work. I am proud that the Department of Military & Veterans Affairs is leading the charge to operate on a lean budget without sacrificing the services residents expect from their government. ■

“My budget for the Alaska Department of Military & Veterans Affairs shows that we are leaning forward to meet the needs of our residents, while trimming the fat to make sure we operate at the highest efficiency.”

—Lieutenant General (Alaska) Craig E. Campbell

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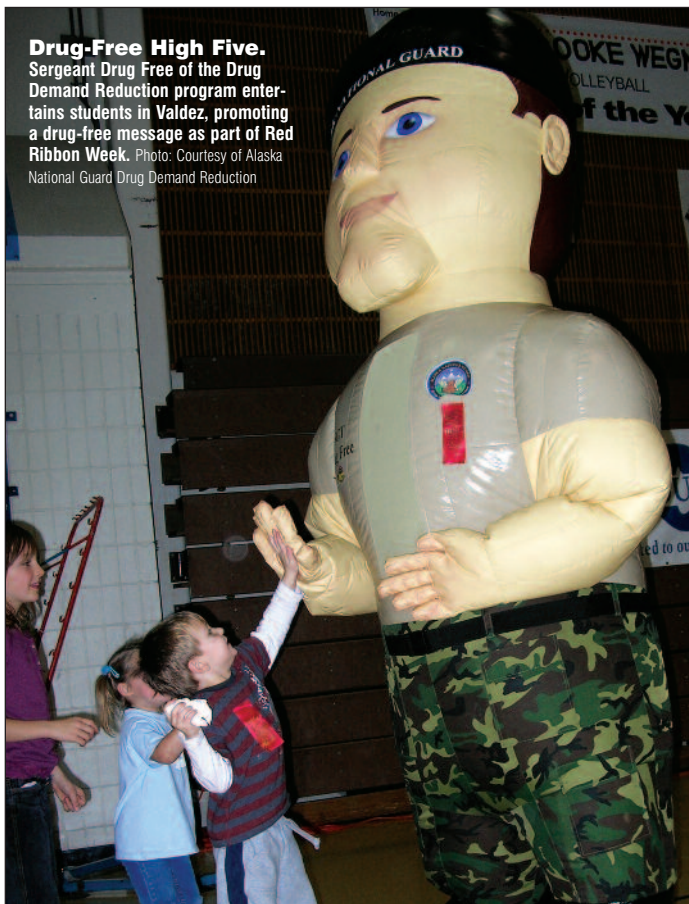
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Dispatches from the Front...

Drug-Free High Five. Sergeant Drug Free of the Drug Demand Reduction program entertains students in Valdez, promoting a drug-free message as part of Red Ribbon Week. Photo: Courtesy of Alaska National Guard Drug Demand Reduction



Drug Demand Reduction Program Celebrates Red Ribbon Week

By Kalei Brooks, DMVA Public Affairs

CAMP CARROLL, Alaska ... The Alaska National Guard's Drug Demand Reduction program supported a number of activities throughout the greater Anchorage area and in Valdez to celebrate Red Ribbon Week in October.

The Drug Demand Reduction program helped six Anchorage schools kick off Red Ribbon Week, Oct. 23-31, and helped 2,081 students understand the importance of living a healthy drug-free lifestyle.

In Valdez, DDR held a slogan contest for students in kindergarten to eighth grade to celebrate Red Ribbon Week. Eighth-grade student Valia Wegner of Gilson Junior High School created the winning slogan, "Speak up with your voice; make a good choice."

DDR also collaborated with the U.S. Coast Guard in Valdez during Red Ribbon Week. This partnership was a welcomed first, as it marked the first time the Coast Guard was involved in an official DDR-sponsored event. This relationship signals the start to many more promising collaborations in coastal communities.

Red Ribbon Week is a national, week-long event commemorating the life of Drug Enforcement Administration Agent Enrique "Kiki" Camarena, who was killed in Mexico in the line of duty in 1985. After his death, in Camarena's hometown of Calexico, Calif., the community publicly showed their support by wearing red ribbons, which became a sign of unity against illegal drugs. Today, Red Ribbon campaigns raise awareness of drug-free lifestyles. ■

Army Guardsman Competes in Biathlon

By Kalei Brooks, DMVA Public Affairs

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... An Alaska Army National Guardsman is among the five athletes representing the USA National Guard Biathlon Program in international competitions.

Sergeant First Class Lauren Kostoff, 49th Missile Defense Battalion, was selected by the National Guard Bureau sports office to compete in both the 2008 Argentine International Mountain Troop Competition and the Military Ski Biathlon International Championship in Chile in August 2008.

According to Kostoff, "The purpose of sending biathletes on the two trips to South America is to build and improve military friendship and relations with foreign militaries through the sport of biathlon."

Biathlon is a sport that combines the intensity of cross-country skiing with the precision of rifle marksmanship. Kostoff said a few white-out blizzards at the two events made for challenging shooting and skiing conditions.

The competition consisted of a 10-kilometer biathlon sprint, 20-kilometer individual biathlon race, 15-kilometer cross-country ski race and a 25-kilometer team patrol race.

Kostoff said his "greatest passion is for cross country skiing," and he "truly appreciates every given opportunity to help promote



Winter Biathlon. Alaska Army National Guard Sergeant First Class Lauren Kostoff, 49th Missile Defense Battalion, left, and USA teammate Senior Master Sergeant Keith Spencer, Wyoming Air National Guard, aim downrange during the shooting portion of the 10-kilometer sprint biathlon race near Bariloche, Argentina, in August 2008. The athletes are part of the USA National Guard Biathlon Program sponsored by the National Guard Bureau's Sports Office. Photo: Specialist Heidi Kroll, National Guard Bureau Sports Office

the great sport of winter biathlon and is very proud of the fact that he represents his unit at Fort Greely."

Kostoff has competed nationally and internationally in the sport of winter biathlon since 1991. Kostoff's next goal is to make the USA All Masters Biathlon team (for racers 45 years of age or older) to later compete in the world Masters Biathlon Championships. ■

Where in the World

Army Guard Aviators to Kosovo

By Kalei Brooks,
DMVA Public Affairs

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... One hundred forty Alaska Army National Guard members from 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment, left the state in December for a one-year peacekeeping and peace enforcement mission to Kosovo.

The Guardsmen are providing aviation support with UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters to U.S. forces and Coalition forces. They took eight Alaska Army National Guard UH-60s with them. This is an air assault mission, in which the unit is tasked with various duties including passenger and cargo airlift, external sling load deliveries, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance.

"Our Alaska National Guard members are undertaking an important mission to help maintain a peaceful environment in which a new, emerging government is taking form in the Balkans," said Lieutenant General (Alaska) Craig E. Campbell, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard. "This is the second time we have deployed troops to Kosovo, and our Soldiers are ready for mission success again."

"It's our mission to provide a safe and secure environment so Kosovo can rebuild and establish its government," said Alaska Army National Guard Lieutenant Colonel Jeff Roach, battalion commander. "We will be helping U.S. and NATO forces provide a place where the people can resume their social structure and government after having been in conflict."

Before arriving in Kosovo, the unit spent about six weeks furthering their

Mother's Kisses. Alaska Army National Guard Staff Sergeant Elejahrose Beronilla, A Company, 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment, embraces her 3-year-old son Alex after a deployment ceremony for her unit at the Alaska National Guard Headquarters. Beronilla, of Anchorage, will spend one year as part of a peacekeeping and peace enforcement mission in Kosovo. Photo: Specialist Margaret J. Moonin, DMVA Public Affairs



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Nanwalek



Honored Service. Lucy Kiunya pins an Alaska Territorial Guard medal on the collar of husband, Paul Kiunya Sr., in honor of his service, in an official Alaska Territorial Guard discharge ceremony held in Kipnuk. Paul Kiunya, who served in the Alaska Territorial Guard from 1942-1947, and later served with the Alaska Army National Guard, is one of three surviving members and 56 deceased members from Kipnuk honored during the event for their voluntary service to defend Alaska in the event of a Japanese invasion during World War II.

Photo: Jerry Walton, DMVA Cultural Resource Manager and Alaska Native Liaison



Patriotic Smiles. Major Paul Darling, member of the Alaska Army National Guard's Afghan National Army Embedded Transition Team, shares a happy moment with his family before leaving Anchorage in September for a one-year deployment to Afghanistan. The ETT's mission is to help the ANA gain the necessary training discipline needed in order to develop a stable Afghanistan, strengthen the rule of law, and deter and defeat terrorism within its borders.

Photo: Chief Warrant Officer Two Jeff Arnold, Alaska Army National Guard

training at Camp Atterbury, Ind., with command post exercises, aviation training exercises and mobilization readiness exercises.

1st Battalion, 207th Aviation, is the

most deployed unit in the Alaska National Guard having previously deployed elements to Kosovo in 2004, as well as fulfilling missions in Iraq, Guatemala, Haiti and Honduras. ■



Rescuers in Action. Alaska Air National Guard's 212th Rescue Squadron pararescuemen Staff Sergeant Jeremy Madama, on ground, and Master Sergeant Johnny Davis deploy from a 210th Rescue Squadron HH-60 Pave Hawk via fast rope. Senior Master Sergeant Eric Howell, aerial gunner superintendent for the 210th Rescue Squadron, watches from the helicopter. The Guardsmen from the 176th Wing staged a capabilities exercise for a visiting group of foreign defense attaches in October.

Photo: Technical Sergeant Sean Mitchell, 176th Wing



Nanwalek Freedom Salute. Sergeant First Class Hal Taylor, left, applauds as Sergeant First Class Ken Felchle, right, presents a cased flag to Private First Class Elias Kvasnikoff during a Freedom Salute ceremony held at the Robert Kvasnikoff Community Center in Nanwalek in September. The ceremony was held in honor of Kvasnikoff's dedication and commitment while deployed to Iraq during 2007-2008. All are members of B Company, 3rd Battalion, 297th Infantry, Alaska Army National Guard. Photo: Emily Swenning, Nanwalek Sugestun Immersion School



Jump Wings. First Lieutenant Walter Hotch-Hill, 297th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, stands in formation during the graduation ceremony of Airborne School. Hotch-Hill graduated from the three-week Fort Benning, Ga., school in December and earned his coveted jump wings, which means he is qualified as a paratrooper and can jump from C-130 aircraft. Photo: Captain Joshua Shrader, U.S. Army Infantry Center

important mission in the fight against terrorist organizations and to create a safer front for the people of Afghanistan."

The mission of the ETT is to guide the Afghan National Army units to victory not only on the battlefield but in the eyes of the Afghan people as well. As public confidence in the abilities of the ANA grows, so does the pride and effectiveness of the ANA.

"It's our job to help give the ANA command legitimacy and support by winning the hearts and minds of the people," said First Lieutenant John Bittle, ETT company mentor. "We want the community to understand that we are on its side and want to help it get its country back on its feet."

Members of the ETT will also assist the Afghan National Police and Afghan Regional Security Integration Command in the mentoring areas of combat advising and training. ■

Air Guard Deploys to Qatar

By Major Guy Hayes,
DMVA Public Affairs

EIELSON AIR FORCE

BASE, Alaska ... More than 50 Guardsmen from the Alaska Air National Guard's 168th Air Refueling Wing, based out of Eielson Air Force Base, deployed to Qatar in support of the Global War on Terrorism in late December.

The Alaska National Guardsmen will be providing air-refueling support to U.S. military forces for a 60-day period.

"Guardsmen from the 168th Air Refueling Wing play a critical role in the War on Terrorism," said Lieutenant General (Alaska) Craig E. Campbell, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard. "Governor Sarah Palin and I are very proud of their continued service and dedication to serve Alaska and our country."

The 168th Air Refueling Wing's eight KC-135 Stratotankers transfer more fuel than any other Air National Guard tanker wing, and the 168th is the only Arctic region refueling unit for the entire U.S. Pacific Air Forces. ■

Guardsmen Arrive in Afghanistan

By Specialist Paizley Ramsey,
134th Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... After approximately two months of training in Fort Riley, Kan., a contingent of Alaska Army National Guard Soldiers deployed to Afghanistan for one year to embed with and train soldiers of the Afghan National Army.

The Afghan National Army Embedded Transition Team comprises 16 Alaska

Army National Guard members whose primary mission is to advise and mentor the ANA and security forces within Afghanistan in the areas of leadership, intelligence, communications, logistics, tactics, procedures, fire support and infantry tactics.

"The goal is to assist the ANA in becoming self-sufficient and capable of conducting independent counterinsurgency operations, tactically, operationally and logistically," said Lieutenant Colonel Peter Savage, Alaska Army National Guard Afghan Embedded Transition Team senior mentor. "This is an extremely

Operation Santa Claus

Rings in Holidays

By Kalei Brooks, DMVA Public Affairs

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... The weather cooled, the snow flew and the daylight waned, but the holidays were as bright and joyful as ever in villages across Alaska, thanks to Santa and Operation Santa Claus elves.

This year marked the 52nd annual Operation Santa Claus, an Alaska National Guard community relations and support program that provides clothing, books, school supplies and toys for youngsters in communities across the state each year.

"We enjoy bringing the spirit of the holidays to children and families all across Alaska," said Lieutenant General (Alaska) Craig E. Campbell,



Santa's Sleigh. Mrs. Claus and Santa walk out of their Alaska Air National Guard sleigh in Kivalina while waving to a crowd eager to meet the two.

Photo: Specialist Paizley Ramsey, 134th Public Affairs Detachment



Spreading Holiday Cheer. Governor Sarah Palin helps Santa pass out gifts in Kivalina during Operation Santa Claus. Photo: Specialist Paizley Ramsey, 134th Public Affairs Detachment



Sundae Smiles. Rich Owens, owner of Tastee Freez, looks on as Sonja Shurauloff-Gisler, center, of Tastee Freez, and Carla Overturf, Operation Santa Claus volunteer, serve up sundaes in Ruby. Tastee Freez donates and dishes out sundaes with all the toppings to several villages during Operation Santa Claus each year. Photo: Kalei Brooks, DMVA Public Affairs



adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard. "The greatest thing about Operation Santa Claus is that we get to share our gifts, and the people of the communities get to share their culture; Operation Santa Claus becomes a bonding experience for both urban and rural Alaska."

For children of rural Alaska, Santa's sleigh has come to resemble the Air National Guard's C-130 Hercules aircraft or the Army National Guard's UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter. Santa, Mrs. Claus and a team of elves spread the holiday spirit as soon as the aircraft land and cargo is unloaded.

This year Operation Santa Claus visited Kivalina, Ruby, Newtok, Stebbins, Teller, Brevig Mission, Chalkyitsik and Metlakatla.

During the trip to Kivalina, a special guest made a surprise visit that delighted all in attendance. Governor Sarah Palin greeted the crowd and participated in some of the festivities, helping to spread the holiday cheer. As much as the residents enjoyed and appreciated her visit, it was Palin who said it was her honor to be part of the celebration.

"It's wonderful to be in Kivalina to celebrate the holidays and to be able to do this for the children of the community," Palin said. "It's good to be able to show our support for the National Guard and to show the people of Alaska what our Guard is up to as well." ■



Present Delight. Mrs. Claus and Santa delight in watching six-month-old Levi Williams open a present that the Alaska National Guard's Operation Santa Claus brought to the village of Ruby. Photo: Kalei Brooks, DMVA Public Affairs

HOW IT ALL BEGAN ... The Alaska Air National Guard originally started Operation Santa Claus in 1956 as a result of a request from St. Mary's Mission for toys for their children. Spring floods denied a fishing season that year, and the drought that followed eliminated the big game. Every bit of money the Mission had was used to pay for food to be shipped in, so it appeared there was no money to buy gifts for the children for Christmas that year.

So Guardsmen would accept new or used toys, in those days, from members of the Anchorage community. In turn, they'd rehab used toys, then hand them over to Santa Claus for delivery aboard an Air Guard C-125J Provider.

Throughout the years, as time and social conditions in rural Alaska changed, other villages, schools and groups have invited Operation Santa Claus to their communities. Literally, tens of thousands of Alaska's children and adults have been on the receiving end of St. Nick's good cheer. ■



Start of a Season. A group of volunteers and Ruby residents gather for a group photo commemorating the first trip of the 2008 Operation Santa Claus season. Photo: Kalei Brooks, DMVA Public Affairs



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Joint Forces

Ready to Serve

103rd Civil Support Team Passes External Evaluation

By Kalei Brooks, DMVA Public Affairs

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... The Alaska National Guard's 103rd Civil Support Team – Weapons of Mass Destruction, passed an external evaluation in December that revalidated the unit's ability to respond in support of civil authorities to chemical, biological, radioactive, nuclear and (high-yield) explosive attacks.

"The unit performed very well during the external evaluation," said Lieutenant Colonel Kevin Peterman, "The weather conditions and challenges during the exercise added to the realism and training value."

The 103rd CST faced two major scenarios during the evaluation. Their first mission was to respond to a mock residential complex where a laboratory was discovered along with subtle intelligence indicating an attack on a simulated political banquet, which was also part of the evaluation scenario. Using the information they gathered at the mock residential complex, the 103rd CST went to the scene of the mock political banquet – the Alaska Railroad Bill Sheffield Train Depot.

The evaluation scenarios tested the 103rd CST's ability to characterize and evaluate the threat of the biological, radiological and chemical materials found at the sites, as well as recommend appropriate mitigation strategies and assist with evidence gathering for law enforcement.

"The exercise was extremely successful, and we are very happy with the results," said Ray Toves, director of the U.S. Army Pacific WMD-CST Training and Readiness Division. "They exceeded the standards we used to evaluate them – they passed."

The unit undergoes an external evaluation once every 18-24 months to ensure they are operating to mission training standards set by the National Guard Bureau. The 103rd CST also performs four exercises a year to keep their sustainment training current.

"Constant training and evaluation keep the team's skills fresh, and the 'real-life' call in Juneau a week later had a lot of similarities to the exercise we conducted at the train depot," Peterman said. ■



Protective Gear. Guard members of the 103rd Civil Support Team don protective gear as they search through a mock residential complex looking for simulated weapons of mass destruction during a recent external evaluation.

Photo: Courtesy of the 196th Infantry Brigade



Looking for Clues. A mock residential complex provides the perfect setting for an external evaluation in December of the Alaska National Guard's 103rd Civil Support Team. Photo: Courtesy of the 196th Infantry Brigade



Alaska National Guard Responds to Suspicious Letter

By Major Guy Hayes
DMVA Public Affairs

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ...

A team of seven Alaska National Guard members was dispatched to Juneau in mid-December after a suspicious letter containing white powder was opened in the governor's office mail room.

Just hours after the letter first arrived, the Alaska National Guard's 103rd Civil Support Team arrived on scene and linked up with the incident commander, Chief Eric Mohrmann of Capital City Fire and Rescue.

"After meeting with Chief Mohrmann, we established a command post, briefed our team and prepared a two-man entry team to enter the building," said Lieutenant Colonel Kevin Peterman, 103rd Civil Support Team commander. "The two-man team entered the building, gathered a sample of the suspicious white powder and then handed it over to the FBI for further testing at the state public health laboratory."

This incident came only a week after the 103rd Civil Support Team passed an external evaluation exercise designed to test their skills in the field and keep them proficient in the mission.

"This is why real-world training is extremely important," said Lieutenant General (Alaska) Craig E. Campbell, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard. "The Soldiers and Airmen of the 103rd Civil Support Team are prepared for these situations because their training provides real-world experiences that save lives and protect all Alaskans." ■



SHOWDOWN with Climate Change

By Jeremy Zidek, DHS&EM Public Affairs

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... For thousands of years, the rivers and coast of Alaska have enabled Native Alaskans to live in one of the planet's most challenging environments. Through the centuries, Native Alaskans cultivated a way of life that works in harmony with the environment and takes advantage of natural cycles.

But in recent decades, the climate has changed, and the very land upon which

No Match. Several layers of emergency protective measures in Kivalina prove no match against the relentless assault of the sea. Photo: Andy Jones, DHS&EM Community Planner



Sea Stymies Sea Wall. On Oct. 4, 2008, Kivalina emergency responders hastily repair the seawall as ocean waves threaten the nearby village. Photo: Enoch Adams, Northwest Arctic Borough Kivalina Project Coordinator



many remote Alaska communities are built is washing away.

The critical nature of the situation became clear in fall 2007 when rough waves and high seas damaged the village of Kivalina's newly constructed sea wall. Later that year, the National Weather Service issued a storm warning that forecasted 10- to 12-foot sea swells, which could have flooded the entire village.

Thanks to the heroic efforts of local leaders, assistance from state and borough emergency managers and cooperation from regional businesses, 230 residents were safely evacuated.

On Sept. 14, 2007, Governor Sarah Palin signed Administrative Order 238, forming the Climate Change Sub-Cabinet to advise her of the preparation and implementation of an Alaska climate change strategy.

"When Alaskans come together to solve problems, good things happen," Palin said. "Every Alaskan has been, or will be, affected by climate change and thus has a stake in this effort."

The Climate Change Sub-Cabinet, made up of local, state and federal agencies, established the Climate Change Immediate Action Workgroup of which the Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management has played a central role.

While flooding and erosion affect 184 out of 213 Alaska Native villages to some extent, the Immediate Action Workgroup identified six communities – Kivalina, Shishmaref, Unalakleet, Shaktoolik, Newtok and Koyukuk – that have become more vulnerable as permafrost and shore

ice that once protected their shores have been lost to warming temperatures.

In addition to providing technical and direct assistance, DHS&EM has established a process that will enable each of the six imperiled communities to develop comprehensive emergency plans such as emergency operations, evacuation and continuity of operations.

Andy Jones, a DHS&EM community planner, has visited each of the endangered communities to gather information and meet with community leaders.

"The people of these villages sense the urgency of the situation and are working hard to find a solution," Jones said. "A comprehensive emergency plan will ensure that the people of the community are safe while protective measures or relocation can be done."

The villages of Shishmaref, Kivalina and Newtok have begun relocation plans, but many obstacles need to be overcome before the villages can move.

"A critical element in the relocation process is the partnership between the communities and the state," said John Madden, director of DHS&EM. "A local understanding of the cultural and environmental impacts must be considered, or the state's solution could destroy the social fabric that holds these communities together."

With each visit and each new emergency plan, the partnerships with the imperiled communities become stronger. The environmental outcome of climate change is unknown, but what is certain is that when Alaskans work together, great things can happen. ■



Erosion Effects. Newtok Emergency Manager Stanley Tom inspects coastal erosion near the village. Tides and river currents have undercut permafrost and resulted in the loss of several hundred feet of coastline. Photo: Andy Jones, DHS&EM Community Planner



Veterans Roundup

By Jerry Beale, State Veterans Affairs Administrator

Governor's Veterans Advocacy Award Winner

John E. Wilkins Jr. was awarded the 2008 Governor's Veterans Advocacy Award in Juneau during a Veterans Day ceremony. Wilkins served in the U.S. Air Force, retiring after 20 years of service, including two tours of duty during the Vietnam War. His service to Alaska veterans has been significant, as he has devoted considerable energy and talent to help veterans and their families.



Award Winner. John E. Wilkins Jr. shows off the gold pan signifying his title as 2008 Governor's Veterans Advocacy Award winner. Wilkins served in the U.S. Air Force, including two tours of duty during the Vietnam War. Photo: Courtesy of John E. Wilkins Jr.

Wilkins has served as the Disabled American Veterans department director for the service officers, as well as personally providing service officer claim work for veterans living in southeast Alaska. In the position, he managed the service officer program ensuring proper training was provided in a timely manner, outreach to rural areas was not overlooked, and completed claims were professionally presented to the Department of Veterans Affairs for adjudication regardless of the amount of time, complexity and frustration the process involved.

When Wilkins found that many veterans in southeast Alaska were located in remote villages and did not have the means for transportation to travel to Juneau for veteran services, he purchased a 37-foot watercraft so that he could travel to them. He then organized a group of DAV members to serve as crew and provided recreational fishing and sightseeing outings for both local and visiting disabled veterans on what became known as the "Vet Boat." He said, "Seeing a fellow veteran in a wheelchair smile when they catch a fish is all the reward I need."

State Provides Service Officers

The state provides 12 service officers to assist Alaskan veterans and their families with obtaining the benefits the service member earned while serving our nation. Located in Anchorage, Wasilla and Fairbanks, these men and women are trained and certified to complete claims with the VA and provide information regarding federal and state benefits.

To find a listing for the service officers, go to the Veterans Office web site at <http://www.ak-prepared.com/vetaffairs/> and click on Service Officers under the quick links or call 428-6016 for assistance.

GI Bill

Service members using, or planning to use their GI Bill benefits will see changes this summer. The expanded GI Bill benefits for post-Sept. 11 veterans will become effective in August. This will make many veterans eligible for both the new benefits and those accrued under the Montgomery GI Bill. Some veterans may qualify for up to three different programs, each administered separately. The new rules for veterans' education benefits are still being developed at this time. Keep in contact with the veterans representative at the school or program where you are using your education benefits or the VA regional office Web site at www.gibill.va.gov for additional information.

Hand Salute Authorized

A recent change to federal law now allows veterans to salute the U.S. flag while out of uniform. This includes during the presentation of the colors and the playing or singing of the national anthem. All veterans are invited to salute the flag to recognize the service of fellow service members, past and present. ■

Veterans and Remembrance Day Ceremony, November 11, 2008



▲ **Salute to Fallen Soldiers.** Philip "Face" Walls, of the Vietnam Motorcycle Club, John "Mumbles" Mergele, of the Vietnam Motorcycle Club, Alaska Army National Guard Colonel Cathy Jorgensen and Fred "Bulldog" Becker IV, of the Vietnam Motorcycle Club, render a salute to the Soldiers memorial, which signifies the loss of those Soldiers who have made the ultimate sacrifice while defending this country. The memorial was part of the Veterans and Remembrance Day Ceremony held Nov. 11 at the Alaska National Guard Armory.

▲ **Remembering the Sacrifices.** During the Veterans and Remembrance Day Ceremony held at the Alaska National Guard Armory Nov. 11, Lieutenant Governor Sean Parnell and Brigadier General Randy Banez, assistant adjutant general for Space Missile Defense, place a wreath in honor of veterans who have made the ultimate sacrifice while defending their country.

▲ **Honoring Veterans.** American Legion Post 1 Commander Jim Grant, a retired U.S. Army Vietnam veteran, renders a salute during the Veterans and Remembrance Day ceremony held at the Alaska National Guard Armory Nov. 11.

Photos: Sergeant Karima Turner, DMVA Public Affairs



GUARDSMAN

Trains with Veteran Dog-sled Racer



Training Run. Alaska Army National Guard Staff Sergeant Harry Alexie runs 10 sled dogs on an 18-mile practice run near two-time Iditarod champion Lance Mackey's 'Comeback Kennel' training facility in Fairbanks.

Story and photos by Specialist Paizley Ramsey,
134th Public Affairs Detachment

FAIRBANKS, Alaska ... Alaska Army National Guard Staff Sergeant Harry Alexie, Recruiting and Retention, 38th Troop Command, is training with champion dog-sled racer Lance Mackey in preparation for the 2009 Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race scheduled to begin March 7.

Mackey has won several elite dog-sled races including back-to-back wins of the 2007 and 2008 Iditarod and Yukon Quest sled-dog races.

Alexie, 30, is training with Mackey at his Comeback Kennel training facility in Fairbanks. They train daily with Mackey's dogs, 16 of which will be on Alexie's dog-sled team in the 2009 Iditarod.

"The training's been great," Mackey said. "I first met Harry up in Bethel when he assisted me with one of my races. I really didn't know Harry too well when we started training but to find out that he had a little race experience and his own kennel was comforting."

Alexie has adopted Mackey's style of training, which consists of running two teams of 11 dogs on a 22-mile track with a four-wheeler. Gradually, Alexie will begin to run the dogs in increasing increments of 10 miles up to 60-plus miles daily.



Animal Affection. Two of Lance Mackey's dogs show some affection as he prepares them for a practice run at his training facility in Fairbanks. Mackey is the reigning Iditarod champion.



Gathering the Team. Two-time Iditarod winner Lance Mackey and Alaska Army National Guard Staff Sergeant Harry Alexie harness sled dogs before an 18-mile practice run in October.

“These dogs are my kids that I’m turning loose to someone I don’t really know, so it’s important for me to trust his judgment. Now that I’ve worked with him, I think training is going well, and I have the utmost confidence in his abilities. But in the end it’s up to him to get to Nome,” Mackey said.

Alexie has been training with Mackey since Oct. 1 and will continue his training until the race. He will also be competing in two qualifying races, the Gin Gin 200 Sled Dog Race and the Copper Basin 300 Sled Dog Race.

Although a novice to such high profile races as the Iditarod and Yukon Quest, Alexie has participated in the Anchorage Fur Rendezvous Open World Championship Sled Dog Race.

“When I first started mushing it was just for fun,” Alexie said. “I would go around to local villages and get dogs just to run them. After I graduated from high school, I got my own team of dogs, which were sprinters I bought at Fur Rondy.”

If Alexie qualifies in the Gin Gin 200 race in December and the Copper Basin 300 race in January, he will be the first Alaska Army National Guard Soldier to participate in the Iditarod sled dog race.

“Many people aren’t aware of the historical significance of the Guard’s involvement with the establishment of the Iditarod,” Mackey said. “The National Guard helped get us where we are today. That in itself is reason enough to be helping with the training of an Alaska Guardsman.” The Alaska Army National Guard was instrumental in clearing the historic trail in 1975.

Though Alexie still has several weeks left of difficult training that will test the limits of his patience and physical resilience, he’s got the Alaska Army National Guard’s always ready, always there attitude, not to mention the fact that he’s been set up for success through the efforts of a true champion and dog-sled racing pioneer.

“It’s a very rare and exciting opportunity to work with Lance – he’s one of the greats,” Alexie said. ■



Ready for a Run. Alaska Army National Guard Staff Sergeant Harry Alexie readies his all-terrain vehicle, which is hooked up to a team of sled dogs, for a practice run. Instead of using sleds during training, Alexie and his instructor Lance Mackey use ATVs to condition the dogs because it provides a little more resistance on the trail.



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Missile Defense

Missile Defense Test a Success

Missile Launch. A ground-based interceptor missile lifts off from Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif., in December during a live test of the nation's ground-based midcourse defense system. Alaska Army National Guard warfighters from the 49th Missile Defense Battalion launched and directed the missile from the Fire Control Center in Fort Greely and successfully destroyed a target ballistic missile in space.

Photo: Courtesy of the Missile Defense Agency



Fire Direction Crew. Army National Guard warfighters from left: Sergeant Daniel Garner; Staff Sergeant Dustin Lofits; Major Kenneth Weiss; Colonel Michael Yowell, 100th Missile Defense Brigade commander; First Lieutenant Ronald Bailey; and First Lieutenant Jason Caldwell stand for a photo at the Fort Greely Missile Complex shortly after they successfully launched and directed a ground-based interceptor missile that destroyed a target ballistic missile in space.

Photo: Sergeant First Class Richard DeBilzan, Alaska Army National Guard

By Master Sergeant Mike R. Smith, National Guard Bureau

FORT GREELY, Alaska ... Alaska Army National Guard warfighters from the 49th Missile Defense Battalion launched and directed a ground-based interceptor missile Dec. 5 that destroyed a target ballistic missile in space, miles above the Pacific Ocean.

The 13th live test of the nation's ground-based midcourse defense system, designed to protect the United States from a ballistic missile attack, provided an abundance of data for future system development. It was hailed as a success by National Guard officials here and Department of Defense officials at the Pentagon.

Guardmembers here say the system works, and Friday's test proves it.

"This is an operational system that is guarding America. It is part of the first line of defense for America, and you have Guardsmen doing that," said Brigadier General Randy Banez, assistant adjutant general – space and missile defense, Alaska Army National Guard.

Nearly two-thirds of the battalion's Soldiers are military police who protect the missile complex. The remaining Soldiers are highly trained missile complex crew members as well as support staff.

"It's probably one of the most unique battalions that you will ever see," said Lieutenant Colonel Steve Carroll, battalion commander. "It's a challenging mission, but it's also a rewarding one. There are 200 Guardsmen here that are defending 300 million Americans."

Lieutenant General Patrick J. O'Reilly, director of the Missile Defense Agency, briefed reporters at the Pentagon the day of the test and was "extremely pleased."

For the Fire Direction Center at Fort Greely's missile defense complex, 350 miles northeast of Anchorage, the multi-million dollar test came down to five Guard members. The crew helped

assess the threat as they would a real enemy missile, and then coordinated the launch of a GBI from Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif. They then monitored the GBI as it speedily crossed a vast distance to hit the target in space – bullet hitting bullet – off California's coast.

"It shows that the fire direction center, which is the primary executor of the tactical mission, launches the GBI and negates a threat," said First Lieutenant Ronald Bailey, Guard FDC battle analyst. "This is the first time that's been done here, and it showed that the overall architecture and the human element of the system works."

Bailey and two other officers and two noncommissioned officers who make up an FDC crew (a communications operator, sensor operator, weapons system operator, battle analyst and tactical director) said endless training sessions on the Ground-based Midcourse Defense Systems Trainer had prepared them well for the live event.

"We train for many more complicated factors and scenarios," said Major Kenneth Weiss, senior tactical director for the crew. "We went through a lot of training over the last few months, and it culminated today with the shot of a live interceptor. We had a successful engagement, proving the system works." It was his first live test, he said.

In the news, reports said that the nation's leaders as well as the nation's allies and enemies watched the test closely. More than 400 news stories on the test were filed worldwide, according to Lieutenant Colonel Hunt Kerrigan, public affairs officer for the Alaska Army National Guard.

"We host reporters and distinguished visitors here from all over the world including Russian and Israeli media ... all of them want to see our mission," Kerrigan said. "The eyes of the world are on the 49th Missile Defense Battalion." ■

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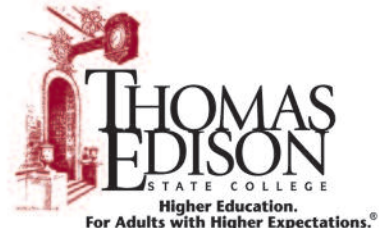


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Alaska Military Youth Academy Builds Bridges, Lives

Story and photos by Specialist Margaret J. Moonin, DMVA Public Affairs

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... Six balsawood bridges built by 31 Alaska Military Youth Academy cadets from the Chilkat class were put to the test in December to see how much weight the structural designs could take.

The bridges were tested for flexion and strength by slowly adding weight to a bucket suspended below each bridge until it reached elastic failure or sustained structural damage. A calibration instrument was carefully placed on the top of each bridge to measure the flexion throughout the test. Bridges that registered more than one centimeter of flexion, sustained structural damage or couldn't hold the initial 47 pounds of weight were disqualified.

"The purpose of testing the bridges is to show, in a real way, whether the engineering design and construction of the bridge worked and to give cadets a fun break from the classroom setting," said Mark Balts, AMYA Chilkat class instructor.

The Chilkat class is an enrichment skills program for cadets who have tested at a 12th grade level or higher upon entering AMYA. The class incorporates project-based



Winning Bridge. Alaska Military Youth Academy cadets carefully remove a bucket filled with 178.5 pounds of weights from a bridge built by ABC Bridge Company, a five-cadet team in the Chilkat class, during the final test of a bridge building project.

learning with real-life aspects.

Balts divided the cadets into six groups and gave each group the task of starting a bridge building company, researching the demographics and environmental impacts of building a real-life bridge, designing, building and testing the bridge, and then writing an analysis of what failed and how to improve their bridge.

This is only the second cycle in which cadets were given the opportunity learn how to work on a project of this magnitude. The winning bridge, built by the Infinite Engineering Corporation, a five-cadet team, held 178.5 pounds before reaching elastic failure and sustaining structural damage. The total weight this bridge held beat the previous year's score by 49.5 pounds.

"This is a project that cadets would normally never get the chance to participate in, as it is designed for college-level engineering students," Balts said.

Through classroom assignments like this, cadets are immersed into real-world job skills and training.

"This is really exciting to watch the final outcome of all the hard work these cadets put into the making of these bridges," said Craig Christensen, AMYA director. "I am so proud of each of them." ■



Putting on Weight. An Alaska Military Youth Academy cadet places a five-pound weight into a bucket attached to a bridge in order to test its flexion and strength at the Alaska National Guard Headquarters in December.



Hold it Steady. Alaska Military Youth Academy cadets, members of the Chilkat class Hard Core Construction team, carefully lift a bucket with 47 pounds of free-weights during the final test of a bridge building project.



Waiting for the Collapse. An Alaska Military Youth Academy cadet cautiously removes his hand from a bucket of free-weights used during a final test of a bridge building project.

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Employers Shown Military Up Close in Hawaii

By Kelly Mellard, 168th Air Refueling Wing

EIELSON AIR FORCE BASE, Alaska ... More than 30 employers of Alaska Air National Guardsmen and Reservists from the Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce boarded a 168th Air Refueling Wing KC-135 tanker in late September to attend a week-long boss lift. Destination: Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii.

Boss lift is a program designed to acquaint employers with the experiences their employees gain while serving in the military. This boss lift trip was sponsored by Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve and the 168th Air Refueling Wing of the Alaska Air National Guard.

During their trip, participants had a non-stop schedule, which included visits to Fort Shafter Flats, the headquarters of U.S. Pacific Command, and Fort Ruger, which is built within the Diamond Head crater. They also received a Coast Guard tour and demonstration, as well as a special after-hours tour of Pearl Harbor and the USS Arizona Memorial.

"Great ... amazing ... awesome," were the guests' reactions to the visit.

Tony Johansen, vice president of Great Northwest, said he was impressed with the knowledge, proficiency and professionalism shown by the Citizen-Soldiers who interfaced with the civilians.

"In all instances, I was impressed by the caliber of the National Guard and Reserve personnel," Johansen said. "The trip provided me with a better understanding of what my Reserve officer does while on Reserve duty and gave me a much better understanding of our National Guard and Reserve."

An unexpected bonus to the trip was the opportunity to take part in a repatriation ceremony – a ceremony that brings back a fallen soldier to his homeland.

The remains came from Vietnam, Laos and the Solomon



Employer Support. Employers of Alaska Guard and Reserve members stand aboard the USS Paul Hamilton docked in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, during their week-long boss lift to Hickam Air Force Base. Photo: Courtesy of ESGR

Islands. It's not known yet who the remains belong to, but they likely came from brave men who died serving their country in World War II or the Vietnam War.

"The ceremony was heart moving," said Joan Johnson, senior manager for Pacific Alaska Forwarders. "I'm so pleased to know they do this for the returning patriots."

The week-long tour was a great success, and hearing first-hand about the military missions in the Pacific was an enlightening experience for ESGR attendees. ■



Thanking Employers. Frank Shaffer, special education teacher at Service High School, left, and Chief Master Sergeant Dennis Hogan, Alaska Air National Guard, right, present Service High School Principal Lou Pondolfino with the Patriotic Employer award from Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve. Pondolfino and Special Education Department Chairman David Kohler were recognized for their support of Shaffer, a 14-year Anchorage School District employee who has taught special education at Service High School for the past two years. Shaffer is also a chief master sergeant in the Alaska Air National Guard and is the state human resources advisor while on Guard duty. Shaffer noted sometimes he can only provide short notice of pending military trips across the state and country but said both Pondolfino and Kohler have been very supportive of his military career.

Photo: Heidi Embley, Anchorage School District

Rescuers Participate in Hong Kong Exercise

By Chief Mass Communication Specialist (SW) Ray Mooney, Fleet Public Affairs Center Pacific



Cleared for Landing. An HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter from the Alaska Air National Guard's 210th Rescue Squadron performs deck landing qualifications aboard the forward-deployed guided-missile cruiser USS Shiloh during preparations for Hong Kong Search and Rescue Exercise 2008. Photo: Petty Officer First Class Michael B. Watkins, U.S. Navy

HONG KONG ... Search and rescue units from the Alaska Air National Guard's 176th Wing's 210th and 212th rescue squadrons arrived here in late October to work with search-and-rescue teams from the U.S. Coast Guard's Honolulu-based District 14 and Hong Kong's Government Flying Service.

It's part of Search and Rescue Exercise 2008 – an international exercise involving forces from the United States, Hong Kong and the People's Republic of China. A total of 450 U.S. military personnel participated in the exercise, which focused on understanding the procedures necessary to search, locate and rescue personnel on vessels requiring assistance or those who have been missing at sea.

"These guys have invited us out on everything that they do," said Lieutenant Colonel Tim O'Brien, commander of the 210th Rescue Squadron. "They've taken us out on familiarization flights on their helicopters. We've landed on islands here in Hong Kong. Our pararescuers got a chance to go down the hoist and into the water, and a couple of our guys have even had the chance to go on actual rescue missions. They've just been fabulous hosts."

The mission of the Hong Kong GFS is comparable to the SAR mission practiced by the Coast Guard and the Alaska Air National Guard, according to Second Lieutenant John Romspert, a combat rescue officer with the 212th Rescue Squadron.

The chance to work with other organizations that perform the same mission makes everyone better, according to Master Sergeant Peter Alexakis, a crew chief with

the 176th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron.

"We have a specific mission that we do for the Air Force and for the state of Alaska," Alexakis said. "In doing that – in sharing our mission with others – if we can learn how to make a better mouse-trap, we will."

"Sitting here with these guys has been fabulous," O'Brien said. "Sitting here and trading pilot talk, if you will on how they do water operations. How do they land on ships? How do we land on ships? What do they do for operational risk management? How is ours different?"

The annual multi-national civil search and rescue exercise is designed to facilitate exchange of procedures, techniques and innovations.

"Everybody gets high value out of working like this because there's not a patent on good ideas," Romspert said. "They do some things different than we do, and it's almost like taking a look at your organization from the outside and seeing how you can improve, what you can do better, or what they can get from us and also do better." ■



Search and Rescue. Hong Kong Government Flying Service Lieutenant Vincent Wong, left, and Technical Sergeant Brandon Stuemke, a pararescueman with the Alaska Air National Guard's 212th Rescue Squadron, practice seaborne hoisting in October during preparations for Hong Kong Search and Rescue Exercise 2008 off the coast of Hong Kong. The annual exercise involved units from the United States, Hong Kong and the People's Republic of China.

Photo: Petty Officer First Class Michael B. Watkins, U.S. Navy



Family Support

Joint Family Support Assistance Program

Kimberly Leary, Family Programs

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... The Joint Family Support Assistance Program embodies the Department of Defense's vision to provide mobile, high-quality family services to augment Family Programs' current ability to meet the needs of active-duty, Guard and Reserve family members.

The primary focus of the JFSAP is to bring these high-quality family services to families who are geographically dispersed from a military installation and who might otherwise be unable to access much needed support.

DoD's goals for the JFSAP are listed in the box to the right.

This new program provides funding for an Alaska-based Military OneSource position, as well as two full-time Military Family Life Consultants.

Alaska's MOS position is filled by Laurie Hogan, who is a nationally connected resource and referral specialist. She can provide you with "one-stop shopping" on educational resources, consultations and referrals to find assistance with the diverse challenges that arise throughout the duration of a military member's career.

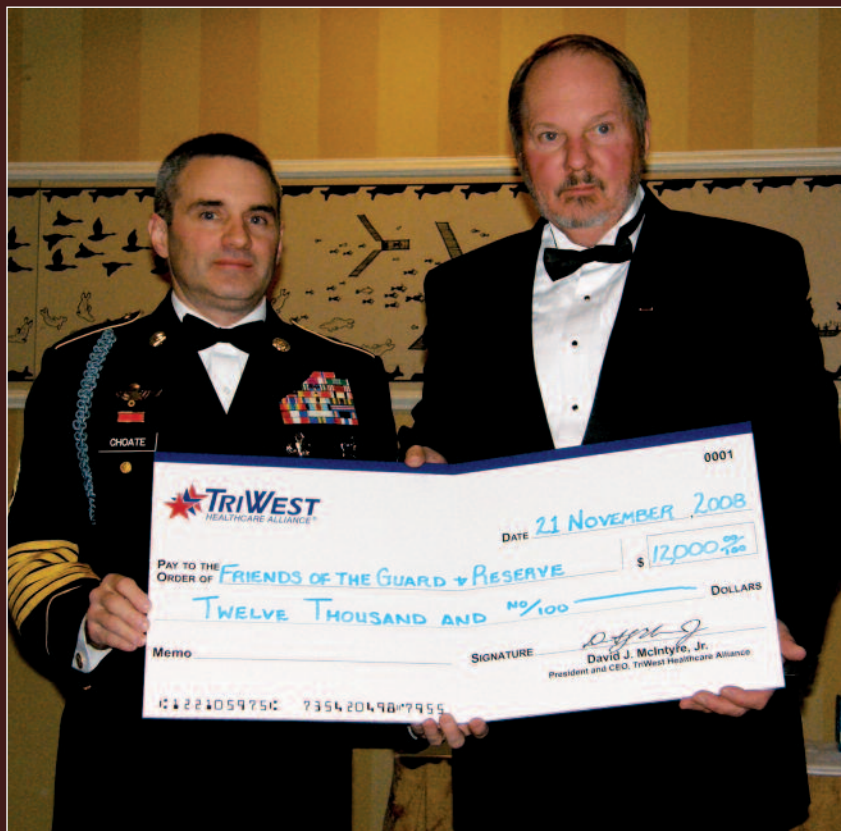
The MFLC positions can now readily travel throughout our state to bring behavioral health support services directly to geographically dispersed active-duty, Guard and Reserve family members who might otherwise be unable to access such support. Our state's two MFLCs, Lyn Tashea and Stefanie Summers, provide "walk-around coaching," a kind of casual, spontaneous outreach opportunity to discuss issues that service members and their families are experiencing. They also deliver psycho-educational presentations on topics that address deployment stress, reintegration, coping skills and skills to build resiliency. MFLCs also attend Family Readiness Group meetings, support mobilization and reintegration activities, assist in reducing stress through informal support, teach workshops and lead focus groups.

In addition to funding the above positions, the JFSAP acts to incorporate and facilitate cooperation between current programs and positions: Operation: Military Kids, the transition assistance advisor, the child and youth coordinator, and the state Family Program Director.

To learn more about the JFSAP program or to find out how it can better help you, please call your local Family Assistance Center toll-free at (888) 917-3608 or local to Anchorage at (907) 428-6663. ■

DoD's goals for the JFSAP include:

1. Creating a "high-tech, high touch" Web-enabled community to connect military families with each other and with supportive resources 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
2. Increasing availability of resources for family members
3. Increasing the awareness of existing services for Active/Guard/Reserve members and families
4. Informing leadership and service providers about the range of available programs and services and how they may be accessed
5. Providing child development resources and referral services
6. Sponsoring volunteers and family support professionals
7. Assessing the need for enhanced support
8. Integrating services and programs into a comprehensive delivery system that responds to members and families at all stages of the deployment cycle



For a Good Cause. Alaska Army National Guard State Command Sergeant Major Gordon Choate, left, and Larry Sutterer, TriWest Health Care Alliance, show off a \$12,000 check that TriWest donated in November to Friends of the Guard and Reserve. The money will be used towards sending care packages, Soldier and family emergencies, family events for deployed troops, and a plethora of other Soldier and family programs.

Photo: Staff Sergeant Joseph Thibault, Alaska Army National Guard

Alaska Air National Guard Looks to Mat-Su Valley

Story and photos by Second Lieutenant John Callahan,
176th Wing Public Affairs

KULIS AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, Alaska ... Do you know someone who needs:

- ☒ A meaningful part-time job?
- ☒ Help paying for education?
- ☒ Some of the best job training in the country?
- ☒ Real work and leadership experience?
- ☒ The opportunity to travel?
- ☒ To network and make connections?
- ☒ To be part of something bigger than himself/herself?
- ☒ To make a difference?

For more than 50 years, the Alaska Air National Guard's 176th Wing – one of the largest and most active wings in the entire Air National Guard – has offered these opportunities to Anchorage residents through its local recruiting office. Now, residents in the Mat-Su Valley have the same opportunities right outside their front door. In December, the Air Guard opened a new recruiting office as part of a joint venture with the active-duty Air Force.

The Air Guard's presence in the new Valley Armed Forces Recruiting Center (1590 E. Financial Drive, Ste. 210D, across from the new Target store) will make it easy for residents of the Mat-Su Valley to find out more about one of the best career options around.

"Our role here is to help interested young people – especially Mat-Su Valley high school seniors and recent graduates – assess their own interests and talents, and then bring them together with opportunities that are right for them," said Master Sergeant Beth



New Guard Members. Governor Sarah Palin, commander in chief of the Alaska National Guard, administers the military Oath of Enlistment to Justin Lawson and his sister, Jessica Newton, at the opening of the Guard's new Valley recruiting office in December. A joint venture between the Alaska National Guard and the active-duty Air Force, the office is the Guard's first-ever full-time presence in the Mat-Su Valley.

Miller, an Alaska Air National Guard recruiter who will work full-time in the new office. "In particular, those looking to attend college are often surprised to learn how much financial aid they can qualify for through the Air Guard.

"This office will also be a great resource for active-duty personnel who live in the Valley and who are looking to separate from the active-duty side, stay in Alaska and continue their military careers by joining the Guard," added Miller, herself a former active-duty member.

For more information on the Alaska Air National Guard's 176th Wing, call (907) 249-1342 or go to: www.176wg.ang.af.mil. ■

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Alaska Army Guardsman Receives Superior Honor Award

Story and photo by Sergeant Karima Turner,
DMVA Public Affairs

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... An Alaska Army National Guard Soldier has been honored with the U.S. Department of State's Superior Honor Award for his exemplary service while serving as an embedded provincial reconstruction team leader during a one-year deployment to Iraq. The award is one of only six honor awards conveyed by the Secretary of State and is normally presented solely to members of the Foreign Affairs Agencies.

Colonel Mike Bridges volunteered to deploy in spring 2007 as the business leader on one of the first Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Iraq. The mission of the EPRT is to help the Iraqi people become a self-sustaining nation with an independent government free from terrorist reign.

"Colonel Bridges came in expecting to be the business team leader, but when the initial team leader departed, Colonel Bridges immediately stepped into the void and acted in a dual capacity as acting team leader and business leader for several months," said Tom Burke, former EPRT Baghdad 5 team leader and senior Foreign Service officer. "His service went above and beyond what was expected and reflected the best traditions of the foreign and military service."

As an Alaska Army National Guardsman, Bridges had spent three years in Nome and had gained extensive experience working with village, tribal and heritage leadership. He saw the parallels between what he'd been a part of in Alaska and what could be done in Iraq.

"It was a unique opportunity," Bridges said. "The experience I had gained in Alaska very much fit what was needed to be taught in Iraq because of its tribal and cultural history and now its new governance under a federal constitution. It helped me to share some of the way we do things in Alaska to blend cultural and heritage leaderships with official government bodies."

Bridges and his team went to work in the field to Taji Quada (district) and Abu Ghraib Quada. Bridges said they used the State Department's model training packets and bi-cultural, bi-lingual advisors as translator/interpreters. They broke everything down and taught local democratic



Superior Honor Award. Colonel Mike Bridges, Alaska Army National Guard, was honored with the Department of State's Superior Honor Award, one of only six honor awards conveyed by the Secretary of State and normally only presented to members of the Foreign Affairs Agencies. Bridges received the award for his work with one of the first Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Iraq.

governance processes 101.

"As the security situation improved, we started linking our local Iraqi government leaders with their provincial counterparts in Baghdad province and then with the ministerial representatives of the federal government of Iraq, where their resources come from."

Initially, when Bridges and his EPRT got the Iraqis to sit down and meet, they were coming across the table at each other with pistols and AK-47s waving and their hands around each others' throats.

"By the time I was finished, months later, they were conducting professional governance business meetings, and I could see them begin to understand the process and the way a democratic government should be run," Bridges said. "It was really exciting to watch. It was like being a new parent."

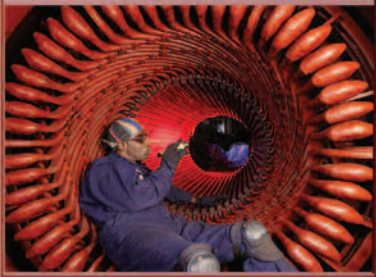
Before Bridges' tour was over, his team was put in charge of a third district called Tarmiya Quada. By the time Bridges left in spring 2008, all three Quadas had held a formal meeting with the provincial council on their own behalf, with ministry officials, the governor or deputy governor of Baghdad, their officials and the service officials in Baghdad.

"I felt like that was the big graduation,"

Bridges said. "It had all been Saddam dictatorship prior to us coming in, and the whole point of sending in the EPRTs was to get the local Iraqis to share and participate and conduct their own governance. When I left, I felt that they understood what it was about and could ask for their government to support their communities. At that point, it was no longer our government anymore. They are now a sovereign government under new leadership and new political system, and I'm proud that my team was able to be a part of that."

Shortly after returning home from his deployment, Bridges received a surprising phone call from his former team leader, who informed him that he had been awarded the Department of State's Superior Honor Award.

"I put Colonel Bridges in for this award because his patience in understanding and application of our foreign policy goals in Iraq, coupled with his professionalism, proved to be a source of stability within the team during his tenure," Burke said. "Colonel Bridges is a dedicated, hard working and focused individual, who was a hero and friend to many. He is a man I would walk point for and be honored if I could work with him again." ■



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Air Guard – JFHQ



"I stand ready to support the mission at any given time."

176th Wing Commander Promoted to General

Story and photo by Second Lieutenant John Callahan,
176th Wing Public Affairs

KULIS AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, Alaska ... Brigadier General Charles "Chuck" E. Foster, commander of the Alaska Air National Guard's 176th Wing, received his general's star insignia and flag during a promotion ceremony in mid-December.

A former rescue helicopter pilot, Foster assumed command of the 1,300-member 176th Wing in July 2008. As the unit's 16th commanding officer and the fourth to be promoted to general officer, Foster is responsible for the well-being of the wing members and the successful execution of the wing's missions of combat search-and-rescue, tactical and strategic airlift, air control and rescue coordination.

At the recommendation of Governor Sarah Palin and the Alaska National Guard's Adjutant General, Lieutenant General (Alaska) Craig E. Campbell, Foster was nominated for the rank of brigadier general by the president of the United States. His nomination was confirmed by the U.S. Senate on Sept. 15.

The 176th Wing is the largest component of the Alaska Air National Guard and one of the largest and most active wings in the entire Air National Guard. ■



New Star in Air Guard. Brigadier General Deborah McManus, right, assistant adjutant general – Alaska Air National Guard, administers the military oath of office to newly promoted Brigadier General Charles "Chuck" E. Foster before a packed house at Kulik Air National Guard Base in December. He is the unit's 16th commanding officer and the fourth to be promoted to general officer.



Awards • Decorations • Promotions

Meritorious Service Medal



Lt Col Mark A. Hedlund144th AS
 Lt Col Peter A. Katinsky211th RS
 Capt Wayne R. Oman176th ACS
 SMSgt Chester P. Deptula Jr.176th MXS
 SMSgt Robert L. Kopp176th ACS
 SMSgt David C. Shuman212th RS
 SMSgt Jennifer D. Keese144th AS
 MSgt Robert H. Tomlinson II176th LRS
 MSgt San Juan E. Ordonez176th ACS
 Col Kent S. Coker168th ARW
 Maj Jeffrey J. Elliott168th SFS
 Maj Adria P. Zuccaro168th ARW
 MSgt Gregory W. Pippin168th OSF
 TSgt Mark D. Young168th MOF
 TSgt Bruce K. Ladson168th MXS
 TSgt Melvin D. Birch168th MSG

Air Force Commendation Medal



TSgt Aaron Pfock176th ACS

TSgt Keith A. Greenhalgh176th ACS
 Capt Wayne R. Oman176th ACS
 Maj John J. Earle168th OSF
 Maj Amy H. Vanderzanden168th OSF
 MSgt Kimberly H. Mortrud168th MXS
 TSgt Travis W. Oaks168th MXS
 TSgt Kaleo A. Vicente168th SFS
 SSgt Sara L. Kerr168th AMXS

Army Achievement Medal



Spc Doralee CastilloJFHQ-AK (Army)
 SpcOscar Cedano207th AVN
 Capt Noel Pediangco207th BDE
 Capt Myles Tenbroeck103rd CST
 Maj Wayne Hunt207th BDE
 Capt Richard Mohammadi ..JFHQ-AK (Army)
 Maj Joel Gilbert207th BDE

Air Force Achievement Medal



TSgt Kelly Burdick176th MXS
 TSgt Robert R. Dubia168th MXS
 TSgt Robert J. Albaugh168th AMXS

SSgt Nathan L. Harbour168th SFS
 SSgt Sara L. Kerr168th AMXS
 SrA Bryan W. Tappen168th AMXS
 A1C Ryan F. Gray168th AMXS

Alaska Legion of Merit



MSgt Gerald Christensen207th BDE
 Sfc Russell Wood49th GMD

Alaska Distinguished Medal



Sgt Ronnie Smith49th GMD

Alaska Commendation Medal



Spc James Reaves49th GMD
 Sgt Daniel Reger49th GMD

Congratulations!

PROMOTIONS

Lieutenant Colonel

Wesley Mooty176th OSF
 Amy Schwalber176th AMXS
 Steve Klump144th AS
 Michael Stowers211th RQS
 Eric Kelm144th AS
 Joseph LawendowskiR&R
 Lori SchanhalsJFHQ-AK (Army)
 Simon Brown297th INF

Major

Eric Schwalber144th AS
 Guy HayesJFHQ-AK (Air)
 Richard Doering297th INF
 Jeffrey Lunsford207th BDE
 William RasorJFHQ-AK (Army)
 Robert Seymour207th AVN

Captain

Jay Randall211th RQS
 James Zwiefel176th CES
 Allison Snow249th AS
 Scott Dickerson144th AS
 Ricardo Montana212th RQS
 Eric Barlow144th AS

Amy Wilson211th RQS
 Kyle Holt297th INF
 Myles Tenbroeck103rd CST
 Timothy Brower297th BFSB

First Lieutenant

Margo Nirel176th OSF
 Nicholas Dillon176th ACS
 Jeremy Vancil249th AS
 Shane Garling176th MXS
 Eric Rutter176th MXS
 Candelario Torres176th LRS

Second Lieutenant

Charity Mollison176th WG
 Duane Griffith210th RQS

Chief Warrant Officer Three

Katheren SandersJFHQ-AK (Army)

Warrant Officer One

Nathan Rehm207th AVN

Sergeant Major

Patrick Meegan297th INF

Master Sergeant/First Sergeant (E-8)

Kenton Connolly207th AVN
 John NievesR&R
 Jody HeffeleJFHQ-AK (Army)
 Edward WashingtonJFHQ-AK (Army)
 Jay KlaassenJFHQ-AK (Army)
 Eric OdegaardJFHQ-AK (Army)

Senior Master Sergeant

Roland Lemieux176th MXS
 James Wolverton168th OSF

Sergeant First Class

John PhlegarJFHQ-AK (Army)
 Andre ScottJFHQ-AK (Army)
 Jacqueline Tyson49th GMD
 Jonathan Shivel49th GMD
 Eric Wood49th GMD
 Thomas Stokesberry207th AVN
 Bradley Spaans207th AVN

Master Sergeant (E-7)

Cindy Cain176th ACS
 James Asselin176th MXS
 Lavonne Gardino176th CES

PROMOTIONS (continued)

Thomas Cubit 176th AMXS
Janet Lemmons 176th CES
Robin Pope 176th WG
Donna Pasley 176th WG
Thomas McRae 176th MOF
Christopher Balsewicz 168th CF
Patricia Ragland 168th OSF
Richard Cain 168th OSF

Staff Sergeant (E-6)

Adam Fleck 297th BFSB
Janet Daw 207th AVN
Jessica Main 297th BFSB
Jeremy Curtis 49th GMD
Erwin Durano 297th BFSB
Joseph Zimmerman RTI
Derrick Holmes 49th GMD
Craig Davis 49th GMD
Laurence Dirkes 49th GMD
Al Wiggins 207th AVN
Shana Harris JFHQ-AK (Army)
Robert Harris Med Det
Elizabeth Robinson JFHQ-AK (Army)
Amy Rodriguez 49th GMD
Larry Martin 49th GMD
Reuben Vargas 49th GMD
Anthony Montoya 49th GMD
Joshua White JFHQ-AK (Army)
Ned Tri Med Det
Tina Barber Med Det
Jonathan Meyer 49th GMD
Russell Smith 49th GMD

Technical Sergeant

Virginia Scott 176th WG
Leovan Claunan 212th RQS
Angel Santana 212th RQS
Scott Blair 176th CF
Yutashea Zirkle 176th MXS
Matthew Schrader 212th RQS
Kevin McElhoes 176th AMXS
Jennifer Meddaugh 176th SFS
James Phelps 176th MXS
Theodore Sullivan 176th SFS
Daniel Collyer 176th MXS
Helen Arvites 176th SFS
Stephan Walker 176th AMXS
Jason Ott 176th LRS
DeWayne Parker 249th AS
Tracy Hartless 176th ACS
Jennifer Johnston 176th OSF
Keith Rowan 168th ARS
Christian Willey 168th ARS
Corrie Elmes 168th ARS
Sara August 168th MDG

Sergeant

Andrew Fueller 297th BFSB
Michael Ortwig 207th AVN
Ayanna Clifton 207th AVN
Jason Rafael 297th BFSB
Ida Hogue JFHQ-AK (Army)
Joseph Spilman 49th GMD
Edwin Smith 49th GMD
Caleb Stout 49th GMD
David Gulley 49th GMD
Kenneth Edgeworth 49th GMD

William Carey 49th GMD
Charles Stiver JFHQ-AK (Army)

Staff Sergeant

Franklin Watts 176th SFS
Silverin Bilbao 176th MXS
Brandon Foy 176th LRS
Bryan Irby 168th LRS
Michael Ledford 168th MXS
Shane McDonnell 213th SWS

RETIREMENTS

Maj Kimberly L. Faulkner 213th SWS
TSgt Randi K. Roberds 168th MOF
TSgt Melvin D. Birch 168th MSG
Brig Gen Tony Hart 176th WG
CMSgt Tammy Kimball JFHQ-AK (Air)
CMSgt Angela Mattila 176th CF
CMSgt Allan Jackson 176th SVF
SMSgt Lynn Ward 176th MDG
MSgt Stephanie Spight 176th LRS
MSgt Cynthia Shults 176th WG
TSgt Robert Braley 176th CES
MSgt Vicky Hahn 176th WG
MSgt Russell Kendall 176th LRS
SSgt Thomas Leonard 176th LRS
Maj Michael Golub JFHQ-AK (Army)
Brig Gen Craig Christensen JFHQ-AK (Army)
MSgt Gerald Christensen 207th BDE
Sgt Lawrence Esmailka 207th BDE
Sfc James Young 297th SPT BN
SSgt Kim Lewis 207th BDE
MSgt Andrew Bodnar 207th BDE
Lt Col Richard Spiers JFHQ-AK (Army)

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Jamie Rivera
Travis Blocker
Amanda Galles
Jeremy Huston

Arielle Park
Dennis Martin
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Kristen Harmening
Alan Hartley
Michael Ralston
Joel Burns
Matthew Nelson
Bethany Marcum
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Joshua Stevenson
Christopher Harding
Rodger Nelson
Eivind Brendtro
Ruben Oliver
Vernon Phillips
Zachary Roberts
Christopher Rush
Katherine Hart
Franklin Watts

Ieszer Corpuz
Thomas Wagenaar
Cory Schaefer
Leanne Bates
Jorge Camarillo
Casey Hall
Matthew Laramie
Matthew Vannoy
Tiesha Allen
Amanda Leonard
Wanda Solomon
Edsel Scott
Temujin Ching
Krystal Dejonge
Vanessa Peterson
Davin Chesser

168th Air Refueling Wing

Chelsey Lindsey
Scott Lanis
Connie Williams
David Mason
James Lane
Reuben Wright
Cynthia Julien
Katie Kokx
Nathan Carey
Scott Beeman
Joshua Hunt
Jonathan Legan
Jason Herring

David Snapp
Robert Rosa
Rachel Crawford
Christopher Thomas

297th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade

Angel Catindig
Nathan Williams

207th Brigade Support Company

Nicholas Farris

207th Aviation

Harry Choi
Clarence Baines
Gerielyn Pugal
John Watson
Anne Buskirk
Mark Raymundo

103rd Civil Support Team

Jason Rode

207th Infantry

Kenneth McLellan
Scot Robison
Brett Howard
Tracy Mumme
Travis McRae
Brady Westwood

Michael Rodriguez
Zachary South
Arlene Renkel
Matthew Huston
Scott Girard
Richard Polly
Branden Collins

297th Infantry

Genady Basargin
Bryan DeKlerk
Brett Edwards
Wilson Berlin
Spencer Sheals
Rodney Omelau
Keith Humphrey
Charles McCracken
Paul Smith
Christopher Johnston
Sean Wathen
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Warriors Training Schedule

Here are the inactive training dates for most Alaska Army and Air National Guard units. All dates are subject to change.

	February	March	April
Alaska National Guard			
Joint Forces Headquarters – Alaska (Air)	7-8	21-22	18-19
Joint Forces Headquarters – Alaska (Army)	7-8	Feb 28-March 1	18-19
Alaska Army National Guard			
297th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade	7-8	Feb 27-March 1	17-19
38th Troop Command	7-8	7-8	4-5
Alaska Air National Guard			
168th Air Refueling Wing	7-8	21-22	18-19
176th Wing	7-8	21-22	18-19
Alaska State Defense Force			
Headquarters	21-22	21-22	18-19

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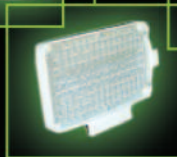
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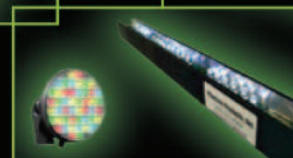
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